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Theological Libraries in the United States

by

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THEOLOGICAL education in the United States has passed through three eras: college, tutorial and seminary.

The first or college stage is interestingly set forth by Samuel Eliot Morison in his history of Harvard in the seventeenth century. He shows how Latin, Greek and Hebrew were required studies in an age when Latin was still the learned language of western Europe, and the study of the Bible in the original tongues was mandatory for students for the Protestant ministry. The common concept that early Harvard trained almost exclusively students for the ministry is not true. In the seventeenth century less than half of the alumni of Harvard became ordained.

The earliest chair endowed in an American college, the Hollis professorship of divinity was founded at Harvard in 1721. By 1755 Yale had its professorship of divinity; the pattern tended to spread.

The second stage in American theological education was the tutorial or parsonage preparation for the ministry. A successful pastor would take one or two young men into his home, perhaps as boarders, supervise and discuss their reading, debate theological problems with them, and see to it that each one received diversified practice in such church duties as could be performed by an unordained man. Undoubtedly the French and Indian War and the American Revolution, with their attendant confusion and poverty, helped spread this informal style of education, which has been described by Mary Gambrell in her *Ministerial Training in Eighteenth Century New England*.

The third stage in clerical education was the theological seminary. The way for it was prepared by a transitional system under which a small denomination appointed one minister as its sole approved tutor. In the New York area this was a Dutch Reformed pastor, Rev. John H. Livingston, born in America, but educated in theology at the University of Utrecht. He was an admirable specimen, famous and beloved. From 1810 until his death in 1825 the scene of his labors was New Brunswick, New Jersey. The endowment of two additional chairs transformed Doctor Livingston's school into the New Brunswick Theological Seminary. A

parallel development, begun in 1794 in western Pennsylvania, founded a seminary which moved to Xenia, Ohio, and became a stronghold of the United Presbyterians.

The eleven years 1807-1817 saw the rapid spread of theological seminaries: the Moravians founded Bethlehem; the Congregationalists, Andover; the Reformed Presbyterians, Cedarville; the Presbyterians, the Union Theological Seminary at Richmond, Virginia, and the Princeton Theological Seminary. Others in those years included the General Theological Seminary of the Protestant Episcopal Church (New York) and the Baptist seminary now called Colgate-Rochester. The idea was not original, for the Roman Catholics had had since 1791 a seminary conducted by Sulpicians at Baltimore; but before 1820 the pattern of organization had been widely accepted among Protestant denominations.

In the early decades of theological seminary education in the United States, the number of professors in each faculty was only three or four and did not rise to over six in any considerable number of institutions until the 1880's or 90's. The subjects covered then and their amazing proliferations in the twentieth century have been tabulated and discussed in *The Education of American Ministers*, a four-volume report which cost \$75,000 and was prepared and published in 1934 by the Institute for Social and Religious Research, with the hearty co-operation of Protestant theological educators. Included in the third volume is an excellent chapter by Raymond P. Morris of Yale on the libraries of theological seminaries.

To the three eras of American theological education—college, tutorial or parsonage, and seminary—there corresponded three different stages of library development.

The memories which the early ministers brought across the Atlantic were not so much of a library building such as the new wing of the Bodleian (1610-12), as of books: learned folios, pugnacious octavos and pamphlets dull or audacious. In spite of the high cost of transportation, each endeavored to bring essential books with him; but no one, except perhaps John Cotton, had an extensive library.

John Harvard's bequest in 1638 to the college, about four hundred volumes (identified by the late A. C. Potter in an article published by the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, xxi, 190-230) is described by Morison as not exclusively theological, as containing works by Roman Catholic authors, and but little polemical divinity. The first catalogue of the college library, printed in 1723, lists 3,517 volumes of which 1,340 were

folios. Nearly 60 per cent of its books were in the theological field (Morison, *The Puritan Pronaos*, pp. 142-143).

Yale College began in 1701 at a meeting of ministers in Branford, Connecticut, when each of the brethren brought one valuable book from his own library to build the nucleus which by now has grown into one of the splendid university collections of the world. Another gift to Yale was books brought from England by the philosopher and later Irish bishop, George Berkeley, who spent the years 1728-31 in Rhode Island.

The Netherlands, Germany and Scotland were sources of books for the ministers of denominations which originated in those countries and were to be found chiefly in the Middle Atlantic area.

The tutorial or parsonage type of preparation for the ministry required relatively few books and no one knows just which they were. Some, at least, of those libraries were meager. Thus the Rev. Asa Burton (1752-1836), Congregational minister in Thetford, Vermont, trained about sixty men. His entire library is said to have stood on one long shelf. The system of instruction did not call for many books. It was not unlike the old-fashioned practice of reading law in preparation for bar examinations.

The necessity of providing an adequate supply of books and of housing and administering them properly was admitted without question and acted on with promptitude by the early seminaries. Books were housed at first in special rooms in buildings devoted to instruction. Thus at Andover, Bartlet Chapel, contained in its first story the chapel auditorium; on the third, lecture rooms, and in a rather low second or mezzanine story, the library. About 1870, a separate library building was constructed.

Following the technique then customary, books borrowed were charged in ledgers where each borrower had his page. The old constitutions of Andover, printed in Leonard Woods's *History* (1885), prescribe in considerable detail how the library was to be run. The procedures were similar to those then employed in college libraries.

Toward the middle of the nineteenth century, a number of American institutions bought the entire libraries of deceased German professors. The most valuable theological collection imported was that of Leander van Ess, purchased in 1838 by Union; it contained over 13,500 volumes and pamphlets. This former professor of Roman Catholic theology took special interest in biblical subjects, patristics, fifteenth-century books, Reformation literature, liturgies and canon law. He had secured much of his library in the Napoleonic period when ancient cloisters were being

suppressed. Through the van Ess purchase, Union gained the distinction of owning the largest group of incunabula in the United States, and even today Union holds seventh place in America.

The Baptist seminary in Rochester, now Colgate-Rochester, purchased the books of the inspiring church historian August Neander (d. 1850). Andover bought the library of C. W. Niedner, professor of church history in Leipzig and later in Berlin (d. 1865). *Special Collections in Libraries in the United States*, a report compiled in 1912 by W. Dawson Johnston and I. G. Mudge with its supplement in the *Library Journal* for June, 1913, presents a partial list of imported libraries.

More important than the purchase of entire libraries has been the steady importation of books year by year. Unlike Oxford and Cambridge in the first half of the nineteenth century, the German universities accepted the Bachelor of Arts Degree of American colleges and had no religious tests. They also possessed a higher rating for productive scholarship. American theological students were therefore attracted to the German institutions. Though most of the American theologues did not take academic degrees in Germany, they returned to their native country confirmed admirers of German scholarship and importers and readers of German books for many of which seminary libraries had to pay.

In describing for readers of RELIGION IN LIFE the actual condition of theological libraries in the northeastern quarter of the United States, the most helpful approach is not to tell how they are housed, or to try to rival Mr. Morris's systematic chapter covering the manifold aspects of administration. The present section is an informal guide to some of the chief resources that those hospitable buildings contain, and gladly make available for consultation by the general public as well as by visiting experts, ministers and research workers. Most seminaries are cordial in regard to interlibrary loans of all but rare or much-used books.

On the basis of informal visits north and east of a line drawn through Richmond in Virginia, Nashville, Louisville, St. Louis and Chicago, and of other personal contacts, I venture to offer the following observations. The sequence of topics follows in general the revised edition of the *Classification of the Library of the Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York* (1939) prepared by Miss Julia Pettee, its distinguished former chief cataloguer:

Bibliography. Strength in this field is mandatory for seminary or faculty libraries which foster research. Most of the tools needed are listed

with full details by I. G. Mudge in the sixth edition of her *Guide to Reference Books* (1936) or in its supplements by Constance M. Winchell.

Encyclopedic Works and Reference Books. Recent encyclopedias in English may be taken for granted; but few seminaries have Brockhaus in German. Theological encyclopedias usually found are Protestant; as late as 1934 Raymond P. Morris saw reference works of Roman Catholic origin in only one other seminary besides Union out of the thirty-six seminaries he visited. The lack of the recent Catholic encyclopedia in German, the *Lexikon fuer Theologie und Kirche* in ten volumes, edited by Buchberger (1930-38), and of the lengthy and unfinished French ones, is a serious handicap for research.

Philology. Grammars, dictionaries, concordances and texts in Hebrew, Greek and Latin are not always in the latest editions. The tendency is to keep up more with publications in Semitic philology than with those in patristic or medieval Greek and Latin. The periodicals and reference works most consulted by classical philologists are usually missing.

Bible. For manuscripts Harvard, Chicago and the General Theological Seminary in New York deserve special mention; but as was shown in Dr. Henry Preserved Smith's brief survey published in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* in 1923, the number of biblical manuscripts in the United States was small. The list should be supplemented by the *Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada* by S. de Ricci and W. J. Wilson (1935-40).

For early printed Bibles in Latin, consult also the Copinger Collection at the General Theological Seminary in New York, also specimens at Harvard, Yale, Union, Chicago and elsewhere, as recorded by M. B. Stillwell in her *Incunabula in American Libraries* (1940). Union owns the Isaac H. Hall Collections of Greek Testaments, numbering, with subsequent additions 618 volumes.

Many of the larger seminaries and some public libraries have considerable numbers of versions of the Bible; but all those seminary holdings printed later than 1500 are outstripped by those of the American Bible Society in New York.

Christian Literature. In the field of patristics, which is the study of the Fathers of the Church, a number of the larger seminaries have the Migne *Patrologiae*, the Berlin editions of the Greek writers of the first three centuries, and the Vienna *Corpus* of Latin writers. Very few, however, own the *Corpus* of Christian Oriental writers, published in Paris;

these and similar works may be found in places like the General, Union, Yale and Harvard. Medieval writers after the closing date of the Latin Migne (1215) are scantily represented; Neo-Scholastic periodicals and monographs are more apt to be bought by philosophy departments than by Protestant seminaries. As for the Continental Reformers, Lutheran seminaries like Mt. Airy (Philadelphia), Gettysburg and Concordia (St. Louis) can make a good showing; and Union has a thousand volumes by or about Luther. Very few seminaries, however, own the Weimar edition of Luther which presents critical texts. Union has the remarkable collection of works by and about Zwingli gathered by Samuel Macauley Jackson; also scattering material on Martin Bucer and Heinrich Bullinger; and three hundred volumes or pamphlets by or about Calvin.

If one continues the Christian Literature class down through the seventeenth century, there is an embarrassment of riches: Harvard, Yale's Dexter Collection on Congregationalism; Hartford Seminary Foundation; Union's McAlpin Collection of British Theology and History, with its monumental catalogue in five volumes by C. R. Gillett (1927-30), and with its supplement on typed cards, covers 17,500 titles published before 1701; Princeton Seminary also has extensive holdings. Many works by Continental Calvinists are preserved in the places just named, also in the seminaries at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and at New Brunswick, New Jersey. Lutheran writers from 1550 to the rise of Pietism in 1675 seem to be inadequately represented outside of Lutheran libraries; but Union has many works by German Pietists.

Church History. The holdings of Protestant seminaries in this huge field reflect rather closely past and present offerings of courses of instruction. Most of these institutions have only one professor of Church History.

Most Protestant libraries content themselves with collections of historical sources in Latin or in English translations, and with monographs and textbooks in German or English. Literature in French is grossly neglected, partly because so much of it deals with matters interesting to few beside the Roman Catholics.

In view of the fact that since the Civil War German-speaking or Irish Roman Catholics, French Canadians, Italians, Hungarians, Poles, Greek or Balkan immigrants have entered the United States by the million, it is curious that there are so few collections available in Protestant institutions on the churches from which they came and to which they cling.

Notably strong collections in church history are found in the uni-

versity libraries at Cambridge and New Haven; by now Harvard has probably over fifty thousand items in that field. Yale is buying steadily and has greatly surpassed its older treasures such as the Henry M. Dexter Collection on Congregationalism. At Union the McAlpin Collection covers not merely the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as reported in its printed catalogue but affords material on Great Britain to date; and the Van Ess and other collections offer a great deal on the development of the Papacy and its problems during the past four hundred years. In spite of serious gaps, Union is probably the best Protestant library in the United States in which to study Roman Catholicism.

For the expansion of Christianity, written up in so comprehensive a way by Professor Latourette of Yale, literature was available chiefly in New Haven, where the Divinity School owns the Day Missions Library. The Missionary Research Library, now located at Union, administers its own collection and the parallel one of Union. The total is perhaps seventy-five thousand volumes of uncounted but filed pamphlets. It contains books on the countries to which missionaries are sent. These include Mexico and Central and South America.

Probably no Protestant library in the United States has adequate materials on Roman Catholic missions. The Missionary Research Library planned to, but abandoned the project because of its cost.

Comparative Religion. On Judaism the Harvard Divinity School has a considerable collection. The purchase of hundreds of items from the library of Prof. George Foot Moore strengthened the holdings at Union; but all the accumulations of Christian institutions in America are as nothing compared with those of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, and especially the unsurpassed treasures of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York.

The demands of missionaries on furlough from China or Japan, together with the flair of Prof. Robert E. Hume as a book collector, made Union build up, as part of the Charles Cuthbert Hall Collection, an excellent though far from complete body of literature in Western languages on the chief religions, particularly of Asia. Special pains were taken to secure the available translations of sacred books, but in many cases texts in the original languages are lacking. The Kennedy School of Missions, a part of the Hartford Seminary Foundation, is a center for the study of the languages, cultures and institutions of the mission field.

Philosophy of Religion. Recent increases in the time allotted to teach-

ing the philosophy of religion, and the accelerated output of relevant books have made it imperative to spend more library money on this field. No seminary library outranks the others at this point.

Philosophical Ethics, Christian Ethics, Catholic Moral Theology. Philosophical ethics is recommended by seminaries as one of the subjects to be taken in college. Consequently it does not need to be strongly represented in theological libraries.

Christian ethics builds on the teachings of the Bible, but has been influenced by elements such as Stoic philosophy and Aristotelian classifications. Protestant casuistry, as developed, for instance, by William Ames in the 1630's, was taught in early Yale and Harvard, and did not lose its hold in some places until the middle of the nineteenth century. Many seminaries could with profit collect more of such historical material.

Roman Catholic moral theology is a subject in which candidates for the priesthood are most carefully trained. The printing of treatises began in the fifteenth century. Since the publication of the *Code* of canon law in 1917, dozens of carefully constructed manuals on Catholic ethics have appeared. The General Theological Seminary is building up a collection in this field; Union, Harvard and Yale are among the places that have numbers of the older works.

Systematic Christian Theology. The orderly exposition and defense of the Christian faith is the task of systematic theology. However great may be the difference between strictly authoritarian and rationalistic systems, all Christian teachers endeavor to avoid self-contradiction and to look at their own views of Christianity steadily and as a whole. Protestant seminaries should collect good editions of the leading medieval Schoolmen. These should be supplemented by learned monographs, particularly in French. Extensive collections on systematic theology are fairly common. In seeking them follow denominational clues. In addition, among the best places to look are Yale, Harvard, Union and Princeton.

Sociology. Primarily a university subject, it often exerts a profound influence on Christian strategy. Sociological methods for surveying the racial, occupational or religious groups of a neighborhood or city enable churches and other Christian agencies to work more effectively with the members and constituency of their organizations. The details of a new social order which many preachers associate with the coming of the Kingdom of God are definable in sociological terms. The Syllabus of Pius IX in 1864 condemned socialism and communism; Leo XIII and Pius XI

(*Quadragesimo Anno*) made positive suggestions as to social justice; and Pius XII broadcasts his encyclicals and messages which, translated into English, may be heard in American homes.

To a small minority of Protestants the future ideal condition of human society is defined in terms of some socialistic or communistic system. Attempts to formulate a social gospel involve economic theories and goals. It is no wonder that, as in the case of Catholic moral theology, so in the instance of papal pronouncements on social issues, Protestant libraries need periodicals like the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, which is the pope's official organ for the publication of addresses and decrees. In addition there should be available official translations and a judicious selection of books illustrating or discussing the Roman Catholic programs. That parallel Protestant periodicals and monographs should be bought goes without saying; in many seminary libraries that has been done for years. Drew, Yale, Union, Colgate-Rochester and Chicago are strong in this category.

Education. The task of the Church is to teach all nations. Educational principles are involved in almost all of its activities. Therefore many seminaries have departments of religious education, backed by rapidly growing collections of books and periodicals. Sometimes a special room is set apart as a Library of Religious and Moral Education. Here may be shelved books on educational theory and practice, periodicals and monographs on training in religion, with an exhibition of the best current denominational material. Works on psychology, including its application to personal and social problems, may appear in this section, together with resources for students who elect to take brief clinical training at hospitals for the insane. Comprehensive collections may be found at the Boston University School of Theology, Yale School of Religion, Union, Chicago Divinity; also at the Catholic University in Washington. The book reviews in *Religious Education* make it a relatively easy matter to keep the collection up to date.

The Church, Its Constitution, Orders and Ministry. Beliefs as to the nature of the Church, its alleged divine constitution, the validity of certain varieties of ordination, have been endlessly discussed. Episcopal seminaries are usually well provided with sources and literature. At the Protestant Episcopal Divinity School in Philadelphia, St. Clement's Church has deposited the steadily growing Yarnall Collection which is rich in books on the Church, its history, liturgies and laws. The printed catalogue, compiled by the late Prof. Joseph Cullen Ayer, Jr., is a useful tool.

Church Law. After Henry VIII stopped the teaching of papal canon law in England, most English scholars have neglected that field. As F. W. Maitland pointed out, unfamiliarity with the actual workings of medieval Church law has spread false ideas regarding certain aspects of the English past. Today a few church historians and legal experts are attempting a reappraisal.

Those who wish to understand the aims, achievements and compromises of papal policy as registered in concordats or in the history of papal diplomacy must consult collections of papal bulls, encyclicals and other pronouncements, also works on the canon law which are hard to find outside of Roman Catholic institutions. Some of the material is in the Yarnall Collection at Philadelphia, but more of it is at Union, which has valuable files of periodicals, texts and monographs on the canon law of Rome. For Anglican treatises the General vies with the Day and with the McAlpin Collections at Union. In addition to the Catholic University, good material on canon law exists in the law school libraries at Harvard, Columbia and the University of California.

Church Worship. On the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper a good deal of literature, much of it antiquated, is preserved especially in Baptist and Episcopal seminaries. Of the General Theological Seminary it is said that its "collection on liturgics is probably the fullest in America" (R. B. Downs, *Resources of New York City Libraries*, 1940, p. 232). The printed catalogue of the Yarnall Collection in Philadelphia reveals unusual strength. Mt. Airy and Gettysburg are rich in Lutheran material. The Henry Day Collection at Union includes a comprehensive set of historic liturgies. Anglican material is plentiful, some of it in the McAlpin Collection. Reformed and Presbyterian prayerbooks are represented and modern selections of prayers. The bibliography, history and monographic treatment of liturgics is supplemented by files of certain periodicals. Searchers for liturgies printed before 1501 will consult Stillwell's *Incunabula*, and will visit the Pierpont Morgan Library.

Hymnology. Notable collections in this field are to be found at Princeton Seminary where the extensive library of the late Rev. Dr. Louis F. Benson has been added to previous large holdings; in Pittsburgh, at the Western Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church which has the extensive library of the late James Warrington; at the Hartford Seminary Foundation, where the efforts of the late Prof. Waldo S. Pratt have amassed much material; and at Union where the Henry Day Collection

is supplemented by the library and archives of the Hymn Society of America (1922), making a total of over ten thousand volumes, all of which are represented by cards in the Union catalogue at the Library of Congress.

Practical Church Work. Evangelistic work, home and city missions, undenominational religious agencies, pastoral theology, preaching and sermons are included under this head. The literature is chiefly in English, except perhaps in a few Lutheran seminaries and at Union.

Care and Culture of the Individual Religious and Moral Life, Devotional Literature and Practical Ethics. Though few collections have been assembled on precisely these lines, materials exist in many libraries. The subjects interest historians, psychologists, sociologists and pastors.

Fine Arts. The pressure of subjects in a seminary course lasting only three years usually crowds out the study of Christian archeology, art or church architecture.¹ Among the institutions that have wrestled with this problem is Garrett Biblical Institute in Evanston, Illinois. All that most librarians can do is to provide illustrated reference works on Christian archeology, collect a few histories of art, some treatises or monographs on church architecture, and show some of their plates from time to time in glass-topped exhibition cases. The leading center for Christian art in this country is now at Princeton University, to which Harvard is perhaps the closest competitor. The libraries most interested are chiefly Episcopal seminaries.

When a single bomb dropped from a plane five miles high can tear to a mass of flaming fragments the most faithfully gathered and skillfully organized collection of books, the theological libraries of North America have a heavy responsibility to the entire Church. Here may be preserved the records of the labors, suffering and learning of the past.

As they plan for the future, Christian leaders are demanding prompt and adequate information on the problems of Christianity throughout the world. This cannot be extemporized in wartime. Here is a further justification for long continued collecting of research materials and large expenditure for classification and cataloguing. No labor is too great, no preparation too elaborate if it leads to the victory of religion. Every seminary librarian may well take as his model the householder commended by our Lord who brought "forth out of his treasure things new and old."

¹ According to the *Education of American Ministers* (III, 41) only one seminary reported offering a course in church architecture.

